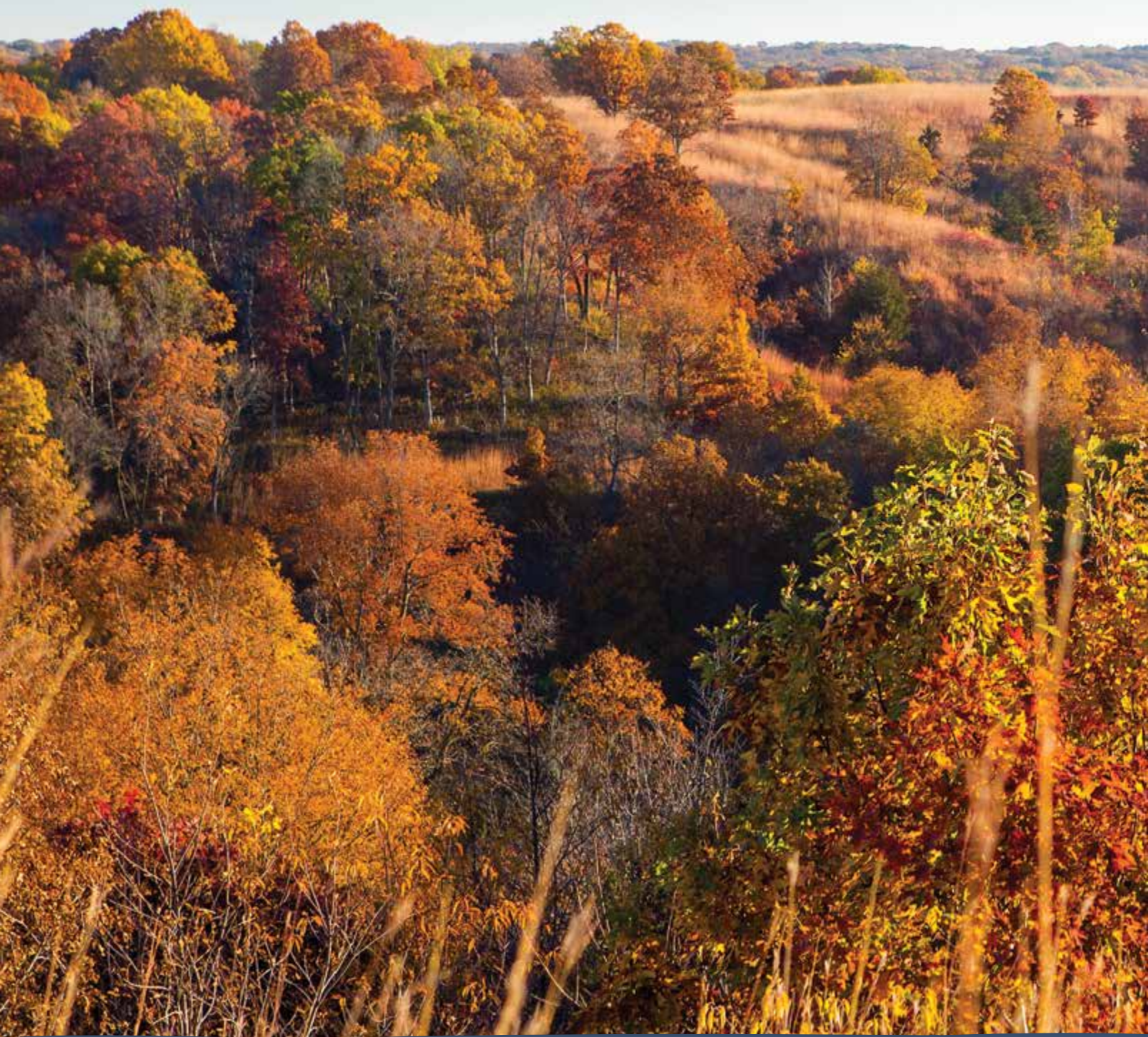




Annual Review

Fiscal Year July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016



Union Ridge Conservation Area

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID STONNER

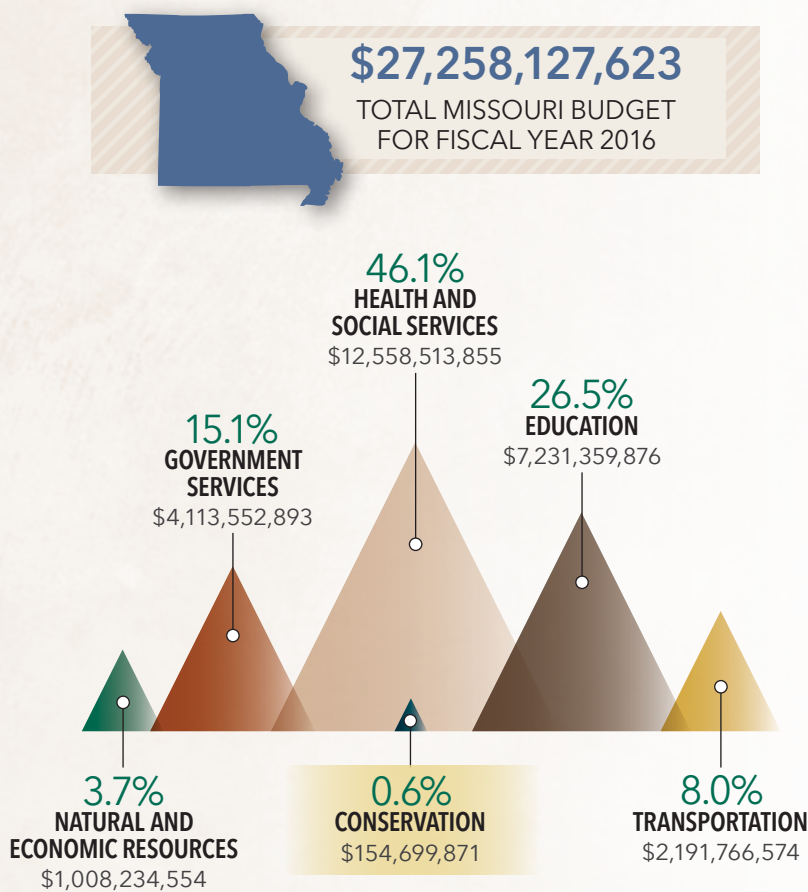
M

MOST PEOPLE DON'T GET EXCITED by the term "annual review." Packed with numbers and statistics, it's easy to flip past the pages for a more interesting story. We ask you to reconsider. The following pages are chock-full of conservation success stories, some even entertaining — virgin snake birth, tagging catfish, black bears — highlighting the Department's key accomplishments from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016.

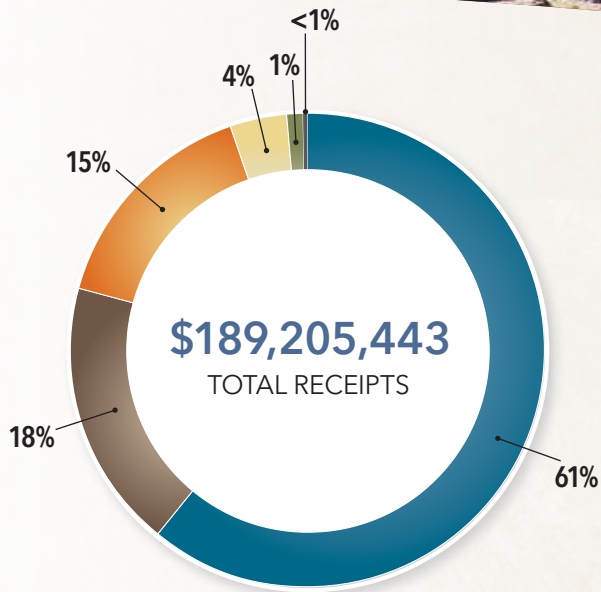
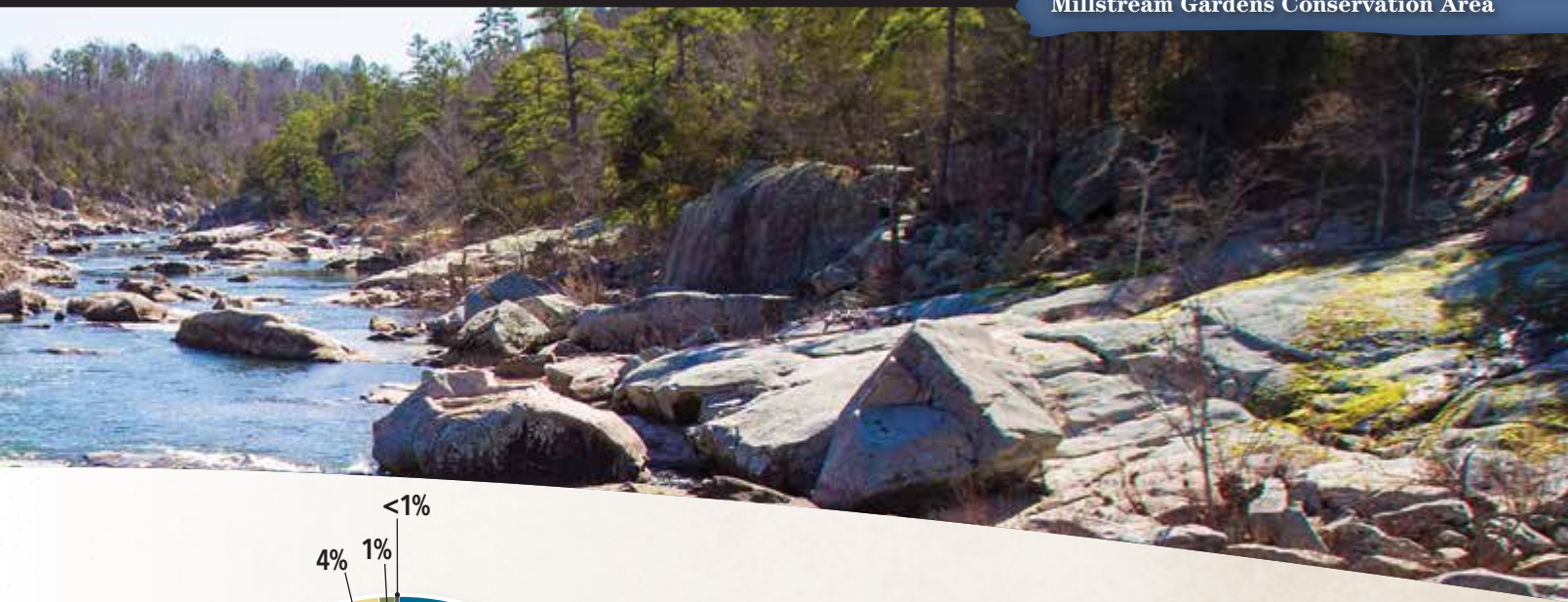
More importantly, these success stories are made possible by you. Missourians care deeply about conservation, and they dedicate dollars to ensure a conservation legacy for future generations. The Department works diligently to carry out our mission of protecting fish, forests, and wildlife in the state and to help people discover nature. Thank you for partnering with us year after year to achieve that mission. Without you, these pages wouldn't be as colorful or our conservation future so bright.

Missouri State Budget

The Conservation Department represents less than 1 percent of the total state budget and **receives no state general revenue**.



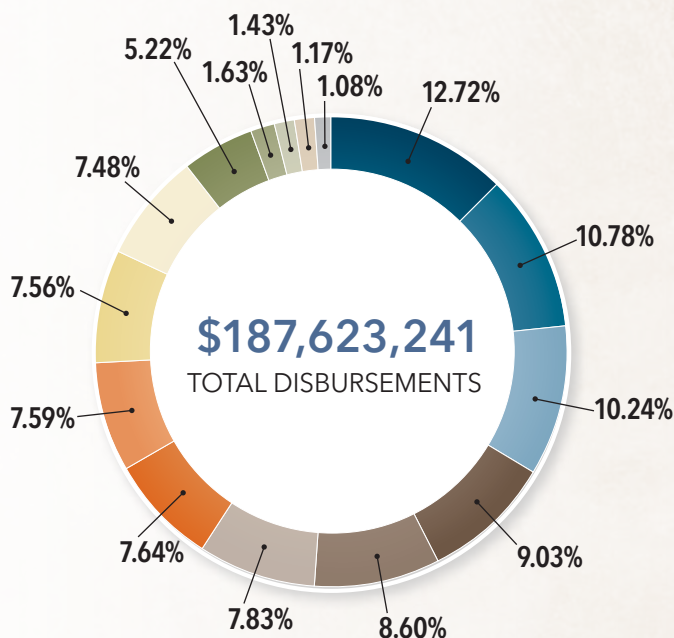
SOURCE: MISSOURI OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION



Receipts

The Department gets the majority of its funding through the **conservation sales tax**. For every \$8 spent on taxable items, one penny goes to conservation.

Conservation Sales Tax	\$115,429,774
Permit Sales	\$34,636,567
Federal Reimbursements	\$29,268,408
Sales and Rentals	\$7,453,396
Other Sources	\$2,043,390
Interest	\$373,908



Disbursements

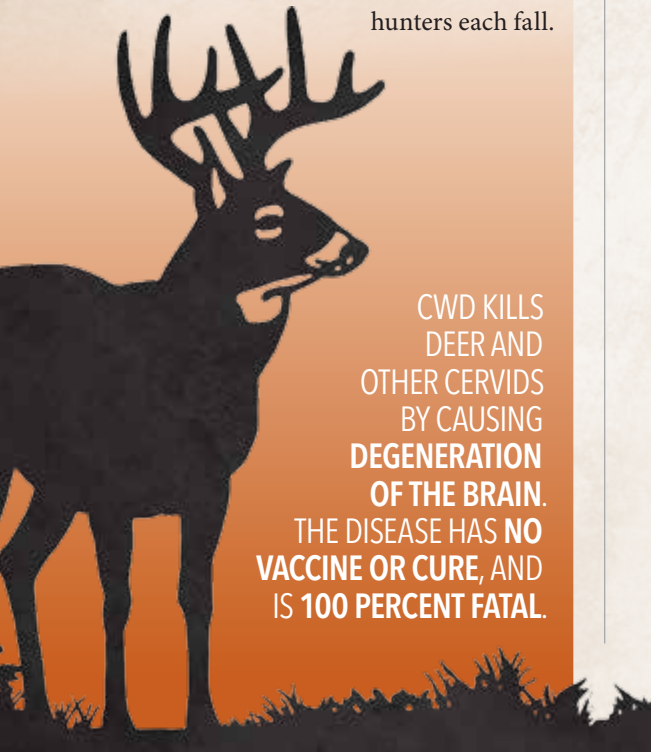
Funds are distributed throughout the divisions to accomplish the **top conservation priorities** across the state for the Department.

Wildlife	\$23,856,280
Capital Improvements	\$20,221,606
Forestry	\$19,208,297
Outreach and Education	\$16,948,983
Protection	\$16,141,009
Fisheries	\$14,699,511
Resource Science	\$14,333,827
Administrative Services	\$14,234,175
Design and Development	\$14,190,320
Information Technology	\$14,037,019
Private Land Services	\$9,785,347
Administration	\$3,052,094
Human Resources	\$2,675,841
Regional Public Contact Offices	\$2,204,105
County Assistance Payments	\$2,034,827

Sustaining and Improving Fish, Forest, and Wildlife Resources

Keeping Missouri's Deer Herd Healthy

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a deadly deer disease that has been found in northeast, central, and east-central Missouri. The Department tested 7,756 free-ranging deer for CWD during the 2015–2016 fall and winter hunting season. Results yielded seven additional confirmed positives for the fatal deer disease, including positives in two new counties, Cole and Franklin. To help limit the spread of CWD, the Conservation Commission passed regulations in December 2015 to increase CWD testing efforts during fall firearms season in November 2016, with mandatory sampling during opening weekend in the 29-county CWD management zone. In addition, the Department has increased CWD surveillance efforts in the southern part of the state after the discovery of CWD in Arkansas. The Department's CWD-testing efforts are critically important to protect a treasured wildlife species that is pursued by about a half-million hunters each fall.



CWD KILLS
DEER AND
OTHER CERVIDS
BY CAUSING
**DEGENERATION
OF THE BRAIN.**
THE DISEASE HAS **NO
VACCINE OR CURE,** AND
IS **100 PERCENT FATAL.**

The Fight Against Feral Hogs

Feral hog populations grow rapidly, producing two litters of piglets every 12 to 15 months, and they carry diseases such as swine brucellosis, pseudorabies, trichinosis, and leptospirosis. These destructive, invasive pests are not wildlife and pose a serious threat to fish, forests, and wildlife, as well as agriculture and human health. The Department's goal with feral hogs is a straightforward one — remove them completely from the Missouri landscape. While this goal seems simple, the solution to eradicate these destructive animals is a multitiered process, including increased trapping efforts, working with private landowners, and deterring hog hunting, which scatters the hogs even farther around the state. In June 2016, the Missouri Conservation Commission approved changes in the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* that prohibit the hunting of feral hogs on Conservation Department lands effective Sept. 30, 2016. The Department also partnered with other conservation groups, agriculture organizations, and the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation to provide more equipment for trapping efforts on private and public land, and to fund public education efforts on the dangers of feral hogs.



Feral hog

Restoration Efforts

Animals and plants play a vital role in a healthy ecosystem. The Department continues its work at conserving the fish, forests, and wildlife in Missouri, including those species on the federally endangered or threatened list.



The Department continued its efforts with the St. Louis Zoo to halt the decline of the **Ozark and eastern hellbender** by rearing several hundred hellbenders at Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery from eggs collected in the wild.



Work continued, in partnership with the St. Louis Zoo, on the reintroduction efforts of the endangered **American burying beetle** on Wah'Kon-Tah Prairie.



Fisheries biologists were busy with restoration efforts of the endangered **Topeka shiner**, a small minnow that lives in prairie streams, and reintroduced 3,760 shiners at Union Ridge Conservation Area.

Science-Based Conservation

The Department uses a science-based approach to manage fish, forests, and wildlife in the state, and research projects are one of the ways the Department obtains this critical information. With several multiyear research projects happening simultaneously, these results help inform management decisions and sustain opportunities for all Missourians to enjoy these resources for years to come.

Deer Study

Department biologists and researchers at the University of Missouri–Columbia are learning more about white-tailed deer survival, reproduction, and movement as a five-year research study progresses. Researchers are in the second year of the study and are currently tracking 177 deer wearing GPS collars. Biologists can then map each deer's travels, or if movement stops, note mortality.



Elk in the Ozarks

Missouri's elk are thriving with approximately 130 elk in the population. A research project is underway to help biologists better understand how elk survival and reproduction differ each year. As the elk herd expands, the Department continues to work with landowners to promote elk habitat.



Turkey Time

A five-year wild turkey research project monitors populations in northern Missouri, which includes banding and putting radio transmitters on wild turkeys to determine gobbler and hen survival. Over the past two years, more than 580 turkeys have been captured, banded, and released. Research will help determine what proportion of the banded wild turkeys are harvested by hunters, and what seasons show the highest survival rates.



Pallid Sturgeon Sampling

In spring 2016, Department staff conducted the eighth annual pallid sturgeon brood-stock sampling effort along a 50-mile stretch of the Missouri River. Fisheries biologists send wild adult pallid sturgeon to Department hatcheries to spawn to benefit dwindling populations until they can be self-sustaining again. Sixty-eight pallid sturgeon and 2,770 shovelnose sturgeon were sampled with 10 pallid sturgeon headed to the hatchery.



Planning for the Future

The Department submitted the Missouri State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), which must be updated and renewed every 10 years, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in September 2016. This large-scale plan assesses the health of Missouri's plants and animals, and identifies actions necessary for the long-term conservation of these resources and habitats. In addition to staff involved in developing the plan, the Department engaged partners during two workshops to obtain valuable input on key conservation landscapes throughout Missouri. Submission of the SWAP qualifies Missouri to receive state wildlife grant money to support ongoing species and habitat conservation.

A Very Fishy Story

Missouri hatcheries are fascinating places to visit. Where else can you see millions of fish at one time? Hatcheries and trout parks also play a vital role in supporting Missouri's stellar fishing through fish stocking efforts across the state. In 2015, the Department's warm-water hatcheries produced 6.4 million fish to stock in public waters, including striped bass, muskie, channel catfish, grass carp, hybrid sunfish, and walleye. Not to be outdone, the cold-water hatcheries also had a strong year, stocking 1.6 million trout at four trout parks, 12 stream special management areas, and Lake Taneycomo. These efforts make Missouri a great place to fish!

Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery



83%
OF MISSOURI WOODS
AND FORESTS ARE
PRIVATELY OWNED

Missouri Managed Woods Program

The Conservation Department has a long history of working with landowners to promote the sound management of privately owned forests. With 83 percent of Missouri woods and forests privately held, care of this important resource is critical. This year, the Forest Crop Land Program, a voluntary program established in 1946 to provide property-tax reduction and landowner assistance, was updated and invigorated into the Missouri Managed Woods Program. The program will provide priority assistance from a professional forester, a forest management plan, help with conducting a timber sale, a property tax reduction, and membership in the American Tree Farm System.

Connecting Citizens to Fish, Forest, and Wildlife Resources

Volunteer Power

Volunteers are a vital part of the work the Department does each year. The conservation work is as varied as the dedicated volunteers — monitoring for water quality or removing trash through Missouri Stream Team, teaching future hunters and anglers, leading programs at nature centers, monitoring forest health as forestkeepers, or large-scale conservation projects through Missouri Master Naturalist chapters. All the volunteers, plus the many projects they help put on the ground, strengthen and advance conservation in Missouri year after year.

Missouri's
4,316 active
Stream Teams
donated
146,919
hours, removed
more than **470**
tons of trash,
planted **5,052**
trees, and
conducted **905**
water quality
monitoring trips.

The 12
community-
based Missouri
Master
Naturalist
chapters
donated more
than **62,000**
hours from
bird monitoring
to tree planting
to native seed
collection.

Conservation
volunteers at
nature centers,
staffed
shooting
ranges, and
interpretive
sites
collectively
provided more
than **59,000**
hours of
service.

Fishing
instructor
volunteers
taught
nearly
6,000
novice
anglers
in more
than **300**
classes
statewide.

Helping Kids and Families Discover Nature

Helping kids and families discover nature is a key part of the Department's mission. Last year, the Department held eight Discover Nature Girls Camps for girls ages 11–15. To get young women excited about the outdoors, camp classes include hunter education, archery, canoeing, fishing, tree-stand safety, and Dutch oven cooking. This popular program added two new camps in 2016, including an additional inner city St. Louis camp.



The Department also partnered with the St. Louis County Police Department to host a Kids Fishing Fair for youth in Ferguson. Kids had the opportunity to learn about fishing under the mentorship of conservation agents, followed by a fish fry. The success of the event showed in the smiles on the faces of the kids, many catching their first-ever fish, and the positive interactions between the kids and law enforcement.



Black bear

Be Bear Aware

Missouri's black bear population is growing. As this exciting part of the state's natural history returns, the Department is educating the public on the safest practices if you encounter a bear. "Be Bear Aware" is a communications strategy that teaches the public not to feed bears, provides safety tips while camping or hiking, and provides instructions on how to report a bear sighting or property damage. Bear signage was developed for the Department's high-use conservation areas in black bear country, or where bears are more prevalent in the southern part of Missouri, to educate hikers on what to do if they see a black bear. Department staff has also increased outreach efforts with the public and media on being bear aware.

*"Bears are creatures of habit, so if they find they can get a free meal somewhere, they're likely to stick around, and **that's when they get in trouble.**"*

—Department Wildlife Management Coordinator Alan Leary



New Missouri Birding Trail

The Great Missouri Birding Trail was launched in April 2016 to welcome new bird watchers and point out a few new birding spots to seasoned veterans. The birding trail is not a physical trail, but rather a map of the “best of the best” birding sites across Missouri. The new website, GreatMissouriBirdingTrail.com, features an interactive map that shows birding locations with high-quality habitats for resident and migrating birds. The trail is divided into six trail regions, each with its own group of sites to explore, with Kansas City, St. Louis, central, and southeast trail sections already complete, and northeast and southwest coming soon. The Kansas City and St. Louis trails also have a Metro Trail, which features birding sites close to the city center to promote urban birding. The project is a partnership between the Missouri Bird Conservation Foundation and the Conservation Department, with other state, nonprofit, and federal supporters.



Feeding the Hungry Through Share the Harvest

While hunters often share their deer photo with family and friends each season, they rarely take credit for the gift that comes next — helping to feed hungry Missourians through their deer meat donation. Through the Share the Harvest program, made possible by the efforts of the Department, Conservation Federation of Missouri, charitable organizations, and local meat processors, more than 3.5 million pounds of deer meat have been donated to local food pantries since the program started in 1992. Hunters can donate all or part of their deer to Share the Harvest.

IN 2015,
MORE THAN
4,500
HUNTERS
DONATED
228,306
POUNDS OF
VENISON TO
MISSOURI'S
FOOD
PANTRIES.





Helping Communities – One Tree at a Time

The Conservation Department awarded \$411,084 to 41 Missouri communities through its Tree Resource Improvement and Maintenance (TRIM) grant program. TRIM grants offer cost-share funding for government agencies, public schools, and nonprofit groups to manage, improve, or conserve trees on public lands. TRIM grants help recipients accomplish activities that keep their neighborhood trees healthy and thriving, including inventory, pruning, planting, and educational programs. Department forestry staff also worked to actively build relationships with rural and volunteer fire departments in communities across the state, and made over 1,900 contacts with fire department staff. In cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, the Department also awarded \$338,490 in grants to 156 rural fire departments for the purchase of wildfire equipment. Rural fire departments in the state use the grants for equipment to increase the efficiency of fire suppression efforts and firefighter safety.

Missouri's Big Ol' Fish

It was a record year for fishing in Missouri, with 16 new state record fish, including five in the pole-and-line category and 11 in the alternative method category. There haven't been this many state fishing records since 2002. The biggest fish topped the scales at 100 pounds and was 57 inches long. The massive flathead catfish was caught by trotline on the Missouri River. For a

list of all current and past state record holders, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/Zk9.



"I've caught several big fish in the Missouri River, but this one is by far the biggest and most memorable. I still can't believe I caught this giant of a fish and broke the state record."

—Mathew McConkey (left) of Kansas City, Missouri, record holder for flathead catfish in the alternative method category.

Next Generation of Active Anglers

Fishing is a great way for kids and families to have fun together and explore the outdoors. Department staff train experienced anglers from all around the state to help others learn to fish through its free Discover Nature — Fishing program. The statewide program provides a series of four separate lessons to help kids and families gain skills and confidence to go fishing on their own.

IN FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016,
314 FISHING CLASSES WERE HELD AND
6,797 INDIVIDUALS BECAME NEW ANGLERS.
THE DEPARTMENT ALSO ORGANIZED
352 FISHING EVENTS ACROSS THE STATE
WITH ALMOST **30,000 PARTICIPANTS**.



ROD AND REEL LOANER PROGRAM

The Department makes fishing more accessible through the Rod and Reel Loaner Program, which is available in 78 locations across the state. People can check out fishing poles and tackle boxes for free at participating sites. The fishing poles are equipped with standard spin-cast reels. The tackle boxes are supplied with hooks, sinkers, and bobbers for basic fishing opportunities. For a loaner location near you, go to short.mdc.mo.gov/ZJq.

Enhancing Operational Excellence and Superior Customer Service



CLIFF WHITE

And the Winner is ... MO Hunting

The Department's MO Hunting mobile app was selected for the 2015 Governor's Award for Quality and Productivity in the category of Technology in Government. The MO Hunting app working team, which included 16 staff from various Department divisions and six employees from technology consultant Timmons Group, was honored at a ceremony in the Missouri Capitol Rotunda last October. In addition, the Department was recognized for its work with Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) by the Environmental Systems Research Institute, a worldwide leader in GIS technology. The team was honored for implementing a Department-wide GIS to help with statewide operations in managing Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife resources.



A New Era for Permits

Did you know the Department issues 2.6 million hunting, fishing, and trapping permits each year? The Department's goal is to make the permit-buying process as easy as possible, including offering various ways to purchase your permit — by app, computer, phone, or in-person at a permit vendor. In March 2016, the Department transitioned to a new permit system with added conveniences for permit buyers, plus a reduction in operational costs for the agency. The new system is now all internet-based, allowing at-home buyers as well as permit vendors across the state to buy permits and print directly on a personal printer. With MO Hunting and MO Fishing, hunters and anglers buy and view annual permits directly from their mobile device.

Missouri's Medal of Valor

Each year, consideration is given to individuals who might be deserving of Missouri's Medal of Valor, the highest public safety award given in the state. The Governor selected nine recipients to receive this special recognition in December 2015, including three Department staff. Conservation Agents Jade Wright, Eric Abbott, and Anthony Maupin were awarded medals for their lifesaving actions to rescue eight motorists and a school bus driver stranded by flash flooding in northwest Missouri.

Conservation Agents Jade Wright, Eric Abbott, and Anthony Maupin



LUCAS BOND



State Forest Nursery

The state nursery annually grows and distributes close to 3 million seedlings of more than 60 species of trees. These seedlings, planted on both public and private lands statewide, include trees and shrubs suitable for reforestation and wildlife habitat restoration. The nursery fills more than 10,000 orders annually, and an electronic ordering system now integrates the inventory tracking and seedling delivery. During the summer of 2015, Missouri Master Naturalist volunteers joined the Department in the Milkweeds for Monarchs initiative. Department staff provided training in milkweed identification and seed collection. Volunteers then collected milkweed seed at various locations throughout the state and sent it to the state nursery for propagation. The nursery successfully propagated close to 50,000 milkweed plants that include three different species of milkweed. These plants will be distributed to Master Naturalist chapters, Department staff, and conservation partners for planting on public lands.



Common milkweed seed

Connecting With Citizens

With conservation agents located in every county in Missouri, agents are the face of conservation for many citizens. They serve a huge role in communicating with the public. Conservation agents represented the Department at 5,331 meetings with civic groups, schools, church groups, and other organizations last fiscal year.

AGENTS COMPLETED **6,836 RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAMS**, PUBLISHED **2,092 NEWS ARTICLES**, AND CONDUCTED **2,350 PUBLIC EXHIBITS**. AGENTS ALSO MADE CONTACT WITH MORE THAN **482,085 CITIZENS** AND ANSWERED **160,820 PHONE CALLS**.



Nature Centers and Interpretive Sites

The Department operates seven nature centers and seven interpretive sites that are open to the public. Together, these centers and sites see more than 800,000 visitors each year and host over 186,850 programs.



Conservation
Nature Centers

- ① Cape Girardeau
- ② Runge
- ③ Springfield
- ④ Powder Valley
- ⑤ Burr Oak Woods
- ⑥ Twin Pines
- ⑦ Discovery Center

Interpretive Sites

- ⑧ Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery
- ⑨ Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center
- ⑩ Columbia Bottom Conservation Area
- ⑪ Rockwoods Reservation
- ⑫ Lost Valley Fish Hatchery
- ⑬ Northwest Regional Office
- ⑭ Northeast Regional Office

Increasing Citizen Access to Fish, Forest, and Wildlife Resources



Increasing Outdoor Recreational Opportunities

A new program was launched statewide in summer 2016 to provide payments to private landowners for public access for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing on their land. The voluntary Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program (MRAP) also offers financial incentives for wildlife habitat improvement on enrolled lands. The program primarily focuses on enrolling lands in northern Missouri, where public access opportunities are generally more limited. Funding for the program is provided largely by a \$1.1 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program. The Conservation Department offered a pilot MRAP program in fall 2015 in northeast Missouri and enrolled more than 1,600 acres. The Department's goal is to enroll as many as 10,000 acres.

"This is a chance for property owners to **generate additional income** while also having the chance to share their land with others."

—Department MRAP Manager Jeff Esely



Pickle Springs Natural Area

Managing Public Land for Missourians

The Department manages more than 900 properties, totaling over 1 million acres statewide, for the purpose of restoring and conserving fish, forest, and wildlife resources and providing outdoor opportunities for Missourians. This year, Department staff worked on habitat management on nearly 267,500 acres of public land, including wetlands, woodlands, forests, savannas, cropland (through permittee farmers and food plots), grassland prairies, old fields, and glades. Public review of conservation area plans also offers an opportunity for Missourians to comment on the management of a specific area. In fiscal year 2016, staff posted online 82 area plans covering 140 areas for public comment.

LISTENING TO MISSOURIANS Delivering excellent public service means listening to and understanding what Missourians say about conservation programs and services. In fiscal year 2016, there were **147 public engagement opportunities**, including smallmouth bass and chronic wasting disease meetings, annual hunter surveys, conservation area plan comment periods, Regulation Committee comments, and a statewide landowner survey.

Missourians for Monarchs Collaborative

The drastic decline of the monarch has spurred conservation action in Missouri and across the U.S. The Department is working with more than 30 agencies and organizations to develop a collaborative monarch and pollinator conservation plan for Missouri. The Missourians for Monarchs collaborative has representatives from agribusiness, conservation organizations, academia, state and federal agencies, volunteer organizations, and agriculture organizations. This plan is being used as a national model for other states because of the diversity within the collaborative and the aggressive goal of establishing more than 19,000 acres of pollinator habitat per year.



Pipevine swallowtail butterfly

Sweat bee

Snowberry clearwing moth

POLLINATOR SUCCESS STORIES

The A.L. Gustin Golf Course, located in the heart of Columbia, is a high-traffic golf course with 125 acres offering a unique opportunity to connect citizens with nature. Department staff partnered with A.L. Gustin to complete habitat improvement projects, including a **youth pollinator seeding event** in 2016 on the A.L. Gustin grounds. Close to 200 youth learned the importance of wildlife and pollinator conservation and, at the end of the event, assisted in establishing a 2-acre pollinator planting.

In 2014, the Department and 50 other diverse organizations partnered with the newly formed Kansas City Native Plant Initiative to establish the Council of Partners. This group began increasing native plants in the Kansas City urban landscape, which developed into a \$229,868 National Fish and Wildlife Federation Monarch Conservation Grant award. This grant facilitated the signing of the **Monarch Proclamation** by Kansas City's mayor in 2016 with numerous ongoing educational opportunities on pollinators.

Community Conservation grants from the Department connected people to nature through habitat management in major parks and open space, including St. Louis's Forest Park, Chesterfield's Eberwein Park, and Kirkwood's Greentree Park. The City of St. Louis Urban Vitality and Ecology partnership and grant leveraged over \$400,000 in other grants to support projects like the **St. Louis Riverfront Butterfly Byway**. This project will focus on creating monarch butterfly habitat along the 19-mile riverfront and working with residents to strategically convert vacant land to ecologically vibrant open space.



Archery in the Schools Builds Confidence

Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP) continues to grow and thrive in Missouri with 580 schools participating each year. This equates to more than 160,000 students in grades 4 through 12 getting the opportunity to learn the lifetime sport of archery as part of their school curriculum. Since the Department joined NASP in 2007, more than half a million Missouri students have participated in MoNASP. The Department hosted the eighth annual MoNASP state tournament in March with more than 1,450 archers competing in the two-day tournament.



MORE THAN
750 MISSOURI
ARCHERS QUALIFIED
FOR THE NATIONAL
TOURNAMENT HELD IN
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.

Community Fisheries Assistance

Through the Community Assistance Program and other partnership programs, the Department enters into agreements with cities, counties, state and federal agencies, businesses, foundations, schools, and colleges to cooperatively develop and maintain facilities for anglers and boaters at lake and stream areas. Currently, there are 119 partners in the cooperative management of 168 public lakes, 43 stream access areas, four lake access areas, 10 aquatic education ponds, and 15 lake access facilities. New agreements were made with the cities of Canton, Concordia, Marble Hill, Monroe City, St. James, and with Harrison County.



CONNECTING WITH LANDOWNERS

Department staff in fisheries, forestry, and private lands services provided technical assistance to **28,873 rural and urban landowners**, including 7,825 personal site visits, resulting in more than 2,700 habitat, forest, and watershed-management plans being developed this fiscal year. In addition, the Department held 422 habitat management workshops, stream and lake management workshops, field days, and technical training sessions for landowners.

Landowner Assistance Cost-Share Program

It was a record year for helping landowners. The Department allocated a record \$1.6 million in cost-share assistance to help landowners meet fish, forest, and wildlife objectives on their property. The cost-share pays for 50–75 percent of a project, such as timber stand improvement, natural community restoration, and pollinator habitat. In addition, over \$1 million in incentives were paid to landowners participating in programs offered by other conservation partners to encourage higher-quality plantings for wildlife, including bobwhite quail and pollinators. The Department also helps USDA implement millions of dollars in practices for landowners through conservation programs funded through the federal farm bill.



Wetland Restoration Funding

The Department received \$2.4 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to restore and enhance existing wetlands on private land. The Department will provide an additional \$700,000 in matching funds, bringing the total investment in wetland restoration to \$3.1 million over the next three years. These projects, funded under the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program and administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, will improve habitat for many waterfowl species, amphibians, and a wide host of other plants and animals. Over 125 private landowners applied for restoration funds. In the first year of the project, approximately 2,000 wetland acres will be enhanced on 20 different private properties across the state.



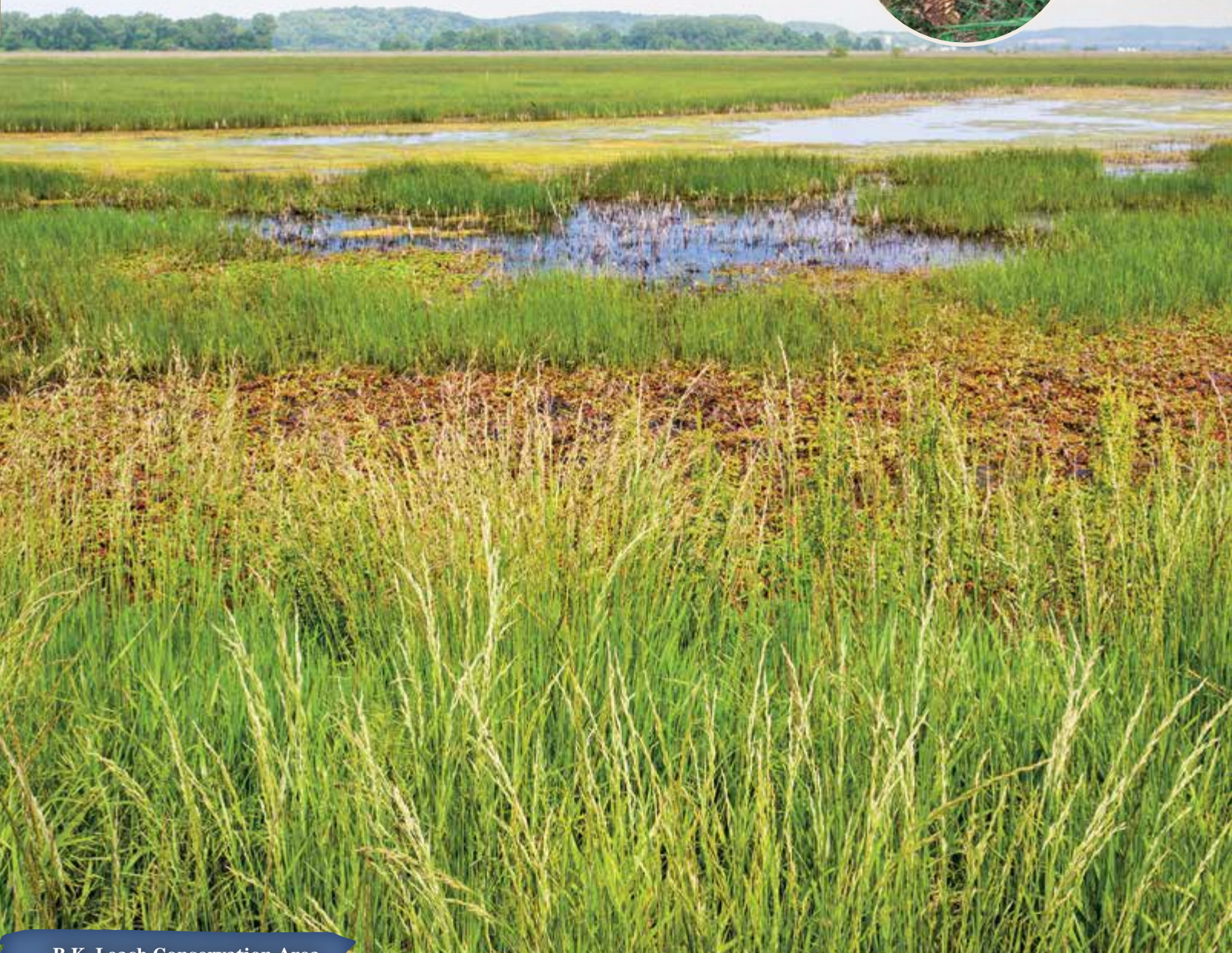
Bullfrog



Black-necked stilt



Common snapping turtle

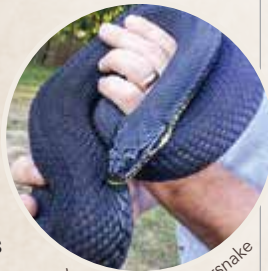


Top Conservation Stories 2015-2016

Virgin Snake Birth

A long-time resident of the Department's Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center, a female yellow-bellied watersnake made international news when she laid eggs in 2016 after having had no contact with a male for eight years.

The offspring from this virgin birth didn't survive, but two young ones from 2015 are thriving and serving as educational reptiles at the nature center.



Yellow-bellied watersnake

688-Mile River Journey

Department resource scientists tracked an American eel on what they called an extreme long-distance migration of 688 river miles. The eel was one of 20 eels implanted with transmitters by Department scientists working on a special project to identify American eel habitat and movement patterns.

Record Flooding

After Christmas 2015, rivers across the state experienced record crests not seen since the great floods of 1993. Department fisheries staff worked around the clock at the hatcheries to help minimize the impact of flooding on the hatchery buildings, fish production, and fish numbers. These tremendous staff efforts ensured a successful fish stocking season, including the March 2016 trout season opener and other fish stocking efforts around the state.



Montauk State Park

RON LEWIS

Wildlife Poaching

Wildlife poaching continues to be a concern in Missouri. In December 2015, a dead bull elk was found shot and the skull plate and antlers removed with a chainsaw along the Current River in Shannon County. The Department is still seeking leads in this case. A black bear, which is a protected native wildlife species, was shot and killed in Jefferson County in May. The Department encourages the public to help report any wildlife violations to their local conservation agent or by calling the Operation Game Thief hotline at 1-800-392-1111.

Stocking Hybrid Striped Bass

The Department stocked more than 300,000 hybrid striped bass in several lakes across the state. The stockings are part of a study and stocking plan to control an overpopulation of gizzard shad in small lakes. The hybrid stripers were reared at the Department's Lost Valley Fish Hatchery in Warsaw.

Did you know that permit sales provide a significant contribution to conservation efforts in Missouri? In fiscal year 2016, permit sales provided **more than \$34 million** in funding to help accomplish top conservation priorities across the state.



1,272,676
DEER HUNTING
PERMITS SOLD



222,534
TURKEY HUNTING
PERMITS SOLD



257,592
SMALL GAME
HUNTING PERMITS
SOLD



895,417
FISHING PERMITS
SOLD



400,507
TROUT TAGS
SOLD

AMOUNTS ABOVE REPRESENT 2016 PERMIT YEAR SALES THROUGH NOV. 20, 2016



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH CONSERVATION

The Department continues to provide a variety of ways to keep in touch with all Missourians. You can get news through our free monthly magazine, the *Missouri Conservationist*, and our bimonthly kids' magazine, *Xplor*, or sign up on our website to get key conservation topics delivered directly to your email. If you live by smartphone communication, you can also get texts, follow us on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube), or check out our mobile-friendly website.

mdc.mo.gov



WATERSNAKE: CANDICE DAVIS